

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
OF THE
BEREAN BAPTIST CHURCH
MANSFIELD, OHIO

Preamble

We, the members of the Berean Baptist Church, in order to effectively and efficiently carry on the work committed to us by the Head of the Church, Jesus Christ our Savior and Lord, do hereby ordain the following Constitution and Bylaws by which we mutually agree to be governed in the affairs of the Church.

Article I

Name and Organization

The name of this organization shall be the “Berean Baptist Church”. The organization took place May 2, 1979 in Mansfield, Ohio. Berean Baptist Church is a nonprofit corporation whose net earnings or any part of them is not distributable to its members, directors, officers, or other private persons, except that the payment of reasonable compensation for services rendered and the distribution of assets on dissolution as permitted by section 1702.49 of the Revised Code is not pecuniary gain or profit or distribution of net earnings.

Article II

Mission

The mission of Berean Baptist Church is to glorify God through

- worshiping Him
- proclaiming biblical truth
- introducing people to Jesus Christ
- discipling believers and
- serving others as a loving, caring family of God.

Article III

Statement of Faith

1. The Word of God

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, fully inspired and without error in the original manuscripts, written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct. For the purposes of Berean’s faith, doctrine, practice, policy and discipline the Board of Deacons, under counsel of the pastors, is the final interpretive authority on the Bible’s meaning and application.

2. The Trinity

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons, that these are equal in every divine perfection; and that they execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence and redemption.

3. God the Father

We believe in God, the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men*, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

*All uses of he, him, man and men when referring to creation refer to both male and female.

4. Jesus Christ

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived by the Holy Spirit. We believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal visible return to earth.

5. The Holy Spirit

We believe in the Holy Spirit who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all who believe in Jesus Christ. We believe that He is an abiding helper, teacher and guide.

6. Regeneration

We believe that all men are sinners by nature and by choice and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.

7. Salvation

We believe that salvation is the gift of God brought to man by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose precious blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of our sins.

8. The Church

We believe in the universal church, a living spiritual body of which Christ is the head and all regenerated persons are members. We believe in the local church, consisting of a company of believers in Jesus Christ, baptized on a credible profession of faith, and associated for worship, work and fellowship. We believe that God has laid upon the members of the local church the primary task of giving the Gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

9. Christian Conduct

We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the well-being of his fellow men; that his conduct should be blameless before the world; that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions; and that he should seek to realize for himself and others the full stature of maturity in Christ.

10. Gender, Sexuality and Marriage

We believe that God created each person as male or female, two distinct, complementary sexes that each reflect His image. We believe that from the beginning God established marriage as a covenant between one man and one woman for procreation and the establishment of family bonds, for growth in holiness, for building morality and structure within society and for mutual fulfillment. For these reasons we believe Christian marriage as described in the Bible (i.e. Gen. 1:26-28, Gen. 2:21-24; Matt. 19:4-9; I Cor. 6:9-10, 18-20; Eph. 5:22-33) reflects the relationship Christ has with His church. We believe that all sexual intimacy should be reserved exclusively for the marriage relationship.

11. Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that from conception to natural death all human life is created by God in his image and is therefore sacred. Human life is of inestimable worth including the pre-born, the aged, the infirm and those with physical and mental disabilities (i.e. Gen. 1:27; Deut. 5:17; Ps. 51:5; Ps. 139:13-16; Pr. 23:22; Lk. 12:6-7).

12. The Ordinances

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church – baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the triune God. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

13. Religious Liberty

We believe that every human being has direct relations with God, and is responsible to God alone in all matters of faith; that each church is independent and must be free from interference by an ecclesiastical or political authority; that therefore, Church and State must be kept separated as having different functions, each fulfilling its duties free from dictation or patronage of the other.

14. Church Cooperation

We believe that local churches can best promote the cause of Jesus Christ by cooperating with one another in a denominational organization. Such an organization, whether a regional or district conference, exists and functions by the will of the churches. Cooperation in a conference is voluntary and maybe terminated at any time. Churches may likewise cooperate with inter-denominational fellowships on a voluntary independent basis.

15. The Last Things

We believe the personal and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth and the establishment of His kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal bliss of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

ARTICLE IV
Church Covenant

Following Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, having been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and agreeing upon scripture as expressed in the Berean Statement of Faith, we solemnly and joyfully covenant with one another as members of Berean Baptist Church to faithfully pursue unity, holiness and growth.

We will build unity:

- By acting in Christian love toward one another
- By encouraging one another through active participation in worship and ministry
- By prayerfully supporting our leaders as they endeavor to follow Christ

We will seek holiness:

- By prioritizing our relationship with Christ daily
- By loving and applying God's Word
- By walking in repentance of sin

We will foster growth:

- By praying for the health of our local body and its mission
- By serving with our talents, spiritual gifts and finances
- By sharing the good news of Jesus Christ with others

ARTICLE V
Government

The government of this church is vested in the body of members who compose it. Thus the final authority for decisions shall be the church membership to whom the officers are responsible. The members of Berean Baptist Church delegate the Board of Deacons to act as legal directors of the Corporation.

ARTICLE VI
Membership

1. Qualifications

To safeguard the principles we hold dear, applicants for church membership must be 18 years of age or older and:

- A. Testify to personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ
- B. Accept the Church Covenant and Statement of Faith
- C. Have been baptized by immersion as a believer.

2. Admission

Membership shall be conveyed through:

- A. New member orientation class (May be waived by the Deacon board).
- B. Interview by a member of the Deacon Board, a pastor or assigned representative to hear testimony and document acceptance of the church covenant by signature.
- C. Recommendation from the Deacon Board regarding each applicant to the church at a regular or special business meeting.

Upon majority approval, the church will welcome the candidate into membership immediately.

3. Status

Berean will recognize the following membership categories:

- A. Voting - 18 years of age or older who regularly attend worship services.
- B. Non-voting:
 - i. Members experiencing extended absence due to mission assignments, non-local academic pursuits or physical disability
 - ii. Members who reside away from the local area more than six months of the year.

Exemptions may be granted upon written appeal to the deacon board. Non-voting members will remain on the membership roll and retain all other links to the church for purposes of love and fellowship but will not be included in the count for a quorum.

4. Change of status

The church will take action at regular or special business meetings to change member status upon recommendation of the deacon board. Upon majority approval, the church will recognize the new status immediately.

- A. Non-voting to voting – Non-voting members become eligible to vote when in accordance with paragraph 3.A.
- B. Voting to non-voting – Members become non-voting when in accordance with paragraph 3.B. upon:
 - i. Contact by a deacon, a pastor or assigned representative, or
 - ii. Request by the member, or
 - iii. Consultation with an authorized proxy for the member
- C. Removal – Voting and non-voting members are removed from membership upon:
 - i. Death, or
 - ii. Explicit request by the member, or
 - iii. Lack of contact, verified by the deacon board, a pastor or assigned representative, or
 - iv. Conduct – Before recommending removal, in the spirit of humility and fear, following the guidance of Matthew 18: 15-17, the deacon board, a pastor or an assigned representative will lovingly counsel with members whose actions seem to be openly at variance with the qualifications for membership.

5. Responsibilities of a voting member

The responsibility of a voting member is to attend business meetings and vote.

ARTICLE VII

Officers

1. Officers

The officers of this organization shall be:

A. The Pastors

B. Elected Officers shall be: Deacons, Trustees, Missions Board, Clerk, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Financial Secretary, Assistant Financial Secretary (4), and Sunday School Secretary/Treasurer.

2. Qualifications

A. General. All officers must be members of the church, be spiritually mature, and at least 21 years old.

B. Deacons. The qualifications of the Deacons are outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9.

C. The pastors shall have experienced a definite call of God to the ministry of the Gospel. Their doctrine shall be in agreement with our Statement of Faith. They shall be sympathetic, cooperative and supportive with the associations of the church, including the various ministries of the Baptist General Conference. They shall meet the qualifications as outlined in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1:6-9.

D. The Senior Pastor shall be an ordained pastor, preferably with a seminary education.

3. Terms of Office

The pastor's tenure in office shall be indefinite but governed by the procedures given in Article XII, item 3. All elected officers may be removed from office early by the same procedure as that outlined for the pastor in Article XII, item 3b.

As far as practicable, one third of the Deacons, Trustees and Missions Board shall be elected annually for a three-year term. A lapse of one year must occur prior to re-election to any board. The other officers will be elected annually.

ARTICLE VIII

Duties of the Officers

1. Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor, as a member of the Deacon Board, shall fulfill his unique office as the spiritual leader of the local church, as stated in Ephesians 4:7, 11-16 and I Peter 5:1-5. He shall preach the Word of God, administer the ordinances and under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, perform all the scriptural duties of his office. He shall serve as an ex-officio member of all boards, committees and organizations. He shall be accountable to the Deacon Board.

2. Pastor of Spiritual Development and Missions

The responsibilities of this position will be two fold. First is to oversee the implementation of Berean's "Baseball Diamond" strategy of Adult Spiritual Development. The desired result of spiritual development in individuals is to move them into missions. The second aspect of this position is to then develop the total Mission Program of Berean, both home and abroad. Shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

3. Worship Pastor

The Worship Pastor is responsible for initiating and implementing all phases of the worship and music ministry. The Worship Pastor shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

4. Youth Pastor

The Youth Pastor is responsible for leading and administering the Spiritual Development of the Youth at Berean through evangelism, shepherding, teaching and equipping Jr. and Sr. High age groups as well as transitioning high school graduates into youth adult Christians. He shall supervise the activities of the Youth Programming Director and shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

5. Children's Pastor

Shall be responsible for the Children's Ministry. Shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

6. Pastor of Evangelism and Community Life

To effectively encourage and train others to share their faith in Jesus Christ, while at the same time helping the community of Berean build relationships. Shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

7. Pastor of Senior Adult Ministry

To develop and oversee effective outreach and pastoral care for senior adults at Berean. Shall be accountable to the Senior Pastor.

8. The Board of Deacon

Deacons shall be responsible for sharing in the pastoral care of members, including visitation for follow-up of new contacts; for interviewing prospective members; for assisting the pastor in administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper and for providing pulpit supply in the absence of the pastor; for administering the Deacon's Fund for purposes of benevolence. They shall serve the congregation in the smooth operation of the ministry and the affairs of the church; be responsible for the agenda of business meetings and all matters to be brought before the congregation. They shall exercise supervision over all board and committees and work with them in relation to church services, financial matters and educational and recreational activities. Administration of music personnel shall be handled by the Deacon Board with ratification by the church membership.

The minimum number of deacons, excluding the pastor, shall be six. Increases shall be ratified by the church membership.

The Deacon Board shall be authorized to spend up to \$5000.00 on the urgent project that is not in the budget as approved by the church membership.

The Deacon Board shall appoint all committee members, subject to ratification by the church membership.

The Chairman of the Deacon Board shall act as legal President of the Corporation and shall serve as Moderator.

9. The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees shall exercise supervision over all matters related to operation and maintenance of church properties and shall be responsible for all church property records. They shall hold trust in all property of the church. They shall not sell or encumber the property of the church unless authorized to do so by $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote of the members present at the meeting of the church in which such transaction has been stated in the call. They shall have the authority to give permission for the use of the church building by any organization within or without the church and shall see that no use is made of the church building (s) that is not in keeping with the principles for which the church stands. Custodial service and personnel will be administered by the Board of Trustees.

The Trustees shall be authorized to spend up to \$2000.00 on an urgent project that is not in the budget as approved by the church membership. A report of all activities, including all expenditures, will be made to the church on a regular basis. The minimum number of Trustees shall be six. The need for additional Trustees shall be determined by the Deacon Board with the ratification of the church membership.

10. Mission Board

This Board shall promote and foster mission interest in the life of the church. It shall establish and recommend mission policies and budgets for the church. This Board shall consist of minimum of six elected members. The need for additional members shall be determined by the Deacon Board subject to ratification by the church membership. The Board shall be authorized to spend up to \$1000 on an urgent project that is not in the budget as approved by the church membership.

12. Moderator

The Moderator shall chair all church business meetings and shall seek to conduct them in an orderly fashion; making sure that advance announcement of meeting and topics are presented to the congregation. The Moderator shall maintain a working knowledge of previous church decisions.

13. Clerk

The Clerk shall record the minutes of all business meetings and give a copy of the minutes to the Moderator and the pastor; shall care for the official church correspondence, maintain a current record of the membership roll and serve as church historian; shall, with the pastor, review regularly the church membership rolls.

The Clerk shall keep on file the minutes of all church board meetings.

The Clerk shall be accountable to the Moderator and the Senior Pastor.

The Clerk shall act as legal Secretary of the Corporation.

14. Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be responsible for the maintenance of an open record of receipts, deposits and disbursements; shall be responsible for receiving invoices for all encumbrances and for their payment by check; shall be responsible for the presentation of a quarterly financial report to the church; shall be assisted in these responsibilities by an Assistant Treasurer and such other assistant as is required in the judgment of the Deacon Board and in the judgment of the Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall be accountable to the Deacon Board.

The Treasurer shall see the financial records of the church are audited in such a way as to meet Generally Accepted Auditing Standards.

The Treasurer shall act as legal Treasurer of the Corporation.

15. Financial Secretary/Assistant Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall receive all money given to the church through regular channels and special offerings; shall keep a complete and detailed record of all tithes and offerings; shall deposit in the bank all money on hand each week, as soon as counted and recorded.

The Financial Secretary shall be accountable to the Treasurer.

The Assistant Financial Secretaries shall assist the Financial Secretary with all responsibilities.

16. Sunday School Secretary/Treasurer

The Sunday School Secretary/Treasurer shall record Sunday School attendance and Sunday School offerings.

Article IX
Committees

1. Standing Committees

The main purpose of these committees is to aid the Deacon Board and the congregation in the smooth operation of the ministries and affairs of the church. All Standing Committees shall be appointed annually by the Deacon Board from the church membership. All Standing Committees appointments require ratification by the church membership.

A. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall choose at least one name for each elective office. Nominations are presented to the committee from voting members of the congregation up to one (1) month prior to the annual business meeting, with the approval of the nominee. The slate of nominations shall be presented to the Deacon Board three (3) weeks in advance of the annual business meeting. Nominations shall be made public two (2) weeks in advance of the annual business meeting. The Deacon Board shall appoint at least three (3) members to the committee; one (1) member of the Deacon Board shall be a voting member.

B. Administrative Committee

The Administrative Committee shall be representative of the congregation as a whole relative to the make-up of its' membership, as follows: Pastoral representative, Deacon Board representative, Trustee Board representative, Mission Board representative, Treasurer/Assistant Treasurer based upon availability, up to three-at-large members if needed for inclusive representation or "subject-matter expertise" (to be determined and selected by the Pastoral Staff). These members, if determined to be necessary, will most likely change with each meeting depending on the agenda.

The committee will meet a minimum of quarterly to consider and make recommendations regarding the following areas. Their role is to research the area, or issue, and present recommended actions to the Deacon Board.

1. Financial Condition of the church including coordination of the annual budget for recommendation to the Deacon Board.
2. Personnel policies and issues, as follows:
 - Develop church policies and procedures within the framework of Berean's Constitution for the appropriate approving authority.
 - Recommend personnel actions such as (but not limited to) hiring, job levels, pay and benefit levels, staffing levels, employee/volunteer complaints, postings, job descriptions and evaluations, and other similar matters as requested by the pastoral staff.
3. Other administrative matters as required. At least a simple majority must be presented for a quorum to recommend actions. To insure continuity, two "regular" (not the at-large) members will rotate off every year. The Church Administrator will remain constant, and the pastoral representative may be the same or change.

C. Other Committees

The Deacon Board may appoint and terminate such other committees as it may from time to time deem necessary.

D. The following positions shall be appointed by the Deacon Board and will be responsible to recruit and train staff:

Head Usher

Social Chairman

Decoration Chairman

Librarian

Article X

Auxiliary Organizations

No organization shall be formed or considered a part of the church activities before its sponsors have submitted their plans to the Deacon Board and had plans approved. Leaders of all organizations, and Sunday School classes, all Sunday School staff, and sponsors of children's and youth activities, shall be subject to approval by the pastoral staff.

Article XI

Procedures

1. Rules of Order

The rules contained in Roberts' Rules of Order shall govern the business proceedings of this church in all cases except where these rules are inconsistent with this constitution.

2. Fiscal Year

The Fiscal Year shall be from January 1 to December 31.

3. Annual Business Meetings

Part I – Elections at the business meeting shall include all elected officers described in Article VII, item 1.B; the number elected shall be consistent with Article VIII, items 9-12, 13, 15-16. The budget will be reviewed and adopted.

Part II – Pastor's State of the Church, final financial reports and reports by other boards and committees shall be submitted for review.

4. Business Meetings

The regular Business Meetings shall be held quarterly. At the direction of the Deacon Board, or in order to satisfy a petition of 10% of the voting membership, the Moderator shall call a special business meeting. Special meetings must be announced in morning services on two (2) successive Sundays prior to the meeting.

5. Quorum

A minimum of 20% of the voting membership is required to transact business. A majority of the voting membership must be present at any meeting which initiates or terminates the call of the senior pastor. Other staff members may be called or terminated based on a majority vote at a business meeting having a quorum.

6. Voting

A majority of the members present at a business meeting must vote in favor of any motion for it to pass. The affirmative vote of at least three-fourths of those present are required to initiate a pastoral call. The affirmative vote of a majority is required to terminate a pastoral call.

7. Absentee Ballot

The purpose of the absentee ballot is to extend the privilege and responsibility of voting to a member who wishes to attend the business meeting and vote, but cannot, due to an uncontrollable circumstance. For a member to have his absentee ballot counted, he must submit his ballot along with an explanation of circumstances to the Deacon Board for approval before the business meeting begins. Under no circumstances shall any member misuse this privilege.

Article XII
Pastoral Relationships

1. Establishment of the Pastoral Relationship

A. Selection and duties of the Pulpit Committee. When it is necessary to call a pastor, a representative Pulpit Committee consisting of at least five members, including one (1) or more Deacons, shall be appointed by the Deacon Board and ratified by the church membership. This committee shall seek a suitable man for pastor of the church and shall arrange for the church to become acquainted with him. Only one (1) candidate shall be presented to the church at one time. In seeking a suitable man, the committee is encouraged to consult the leaders of our conference and to solicit suggestions from the members of the church. It shall investigate the merits of a man, giving consideration to his personal character, education, ministerial record and abilities in relation to the qualifications set forth in Article VII, item 2C & D. If approved the committee shall formulate the call in conjunction with the Deacon Board.

B. Extension of the Call

The recommendation of the Pulpit Committee concerning the call of a pastor, and the terms of such call shall be presented to the church at a business meeting. Notice of such meeting must be announced in morning services on two (2) successive Sunday prior to the meeting. The members shall also be notified by mail at least two weeks in advance of the meeting. An affirmative vote of three-fourths of the members present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend the call. The vote shall be by written ballot. When the call has been approved by the church, it shall be sent to the candidate by the Church Clerk. The candidate's written acceptance of the call shall establish the pastoral relationship as the date agreed upon by the church and the candidate.

2. Working Arrangements with the Pastors

The pastors' salaries and provisions for vacations and participation in opportunities for service and growth shall be agreed upon at the time of the call and shall be reviewed by the Deacon Board at least annually. If changes are made they must be ratified by the church membership.

3. Dissolution of the Pastoral Relationship

A. Resignation. When a pastor resigns, his letter of resignation shall be read to the Deacon Board. The Deacon Board shall present the letter of resignation to the church and recommend the date of dissolution of the pastoral relationship at a regular or special business meeting. In no case shall the date of dissolution be more than sixty (60) or less than thirty (30) days after the acceptance of the resignation by the church. If, in the judgment of the Deacon Board, the continuance of a pastor's ministry should be undesirable, the relationship may be discontinued immediately, but the salary shall be continued for thirty (30) days.

B. Dismissal. Any proposal to dismiss a pastor shall be referred to the Deacon Board for consideration and counsel with the pastor in an attempt to correct the grievances. If the grievances are not or cannot be corrected, the church may dissolve the pastoral relationship upon recommendation from the Deacon Board and a majority affirmative vote by written ballot of the qualified voters at a business meeting. The Deacon Board shall be required to present to the church any written request for the dismissal of a pastor when such a request is signed by 20% of the qualified voting membership at the church.

Article XIII
Affiliation

This church fellowships with the Baptist General Conference (BGC) and Mideast Baptist Conference (MBC). We understand our cooperation to be on a voluntary basis and that this cooperation does not violate our understanding of the scriptures as to the autonomy of the local church nor inhibit any fellowship with other evangelical associations.

Article XIV
Legal Matters

1. Legal Action

When undertaking legal actions as are deemed expedient, necessary or beneficial in promoting the work and purposes of this organization: every conveyance, sale, mortgage or exchange of church property, real or personal, and having a value exceeding \$2,000 must be recommended by the Trustee Board and approved by the Administrative Committee and the Deacon Board. Any such transaction of the church property having a value exceeding \$5,000 must be ratified by the church membership.

2. Division

In case of organic division of the church membership, the church property, real and intellectual, shall belong to those members who abide by this constitution.

3. Dissolution

Should conditions arise where, for any reason, the church cannot continue, the church property shall be transferred to another non-profit organization as approved by a majority of qualified members present at a business meeting. Such transferal shall be in agreement with Ohio Revised Code. Notice of such action must be published at least fourteen (14) days prior to the meeting and shall be announced on two (2) successive Sundays prior to the meeting.

Article XV
Amendment

This constitution may be amended at a business meeting or the church by a two-thirds vote of qualified members present. Notice of such proposed amendment shall have been mailed to the church membership and must be announced in morning services on two (2) successive Sundays prior to the meeting.